

## For the Children

### A TALK WITH MARS.

Benjamin C. Moomaw.

Ten millions for a talk with Mars?  
Expensive in the seeming;  
But conversation with the stars  
Is something more than dreaming.

Would it be worth the cost to find  
Our nearest heavenly neighbors  
Bestowing all the wealth of mind  
And everlasting labors

On bristling camps and bloody wars,  
And folly without measure?  
Or do we wish to witness Mars  
A reek of guilty pleasure?

Now, wouldn't we be shocked to see  
So fair a planet given  
To all the wickedness that we  
Might mention under heaven?

To greed, and yet the meaner role  
Of lies, and Judas kisses,  
And nameless things that fling the soul  
To bottomless abysses?

Why, even in our little moon,  
Which we have always trusted,  
To find a nasty old saloon,  
How we would be disgusted!

'Twould be too painful to unvell  
Such pitiful conditions,  
Or to unfold a sombre tale,  
Contemptible ambitions,

Bedraggled robes, unblushing shame,  
Iniquity infernal,  
A chronicle of blot and blame  
Into the world eternal.

Ah, we would never wish to know  
Of Mars so sad a story;  
So let us rest content, below,  
And leave them in their glory.

Ben, Va.

### ALL UP AND DOWN THE KITTEN TREE.

"There will be no quince jelly this year nor any other year, ever any more!" said Mother Delightful, looking at the fruitless boughs of the tree that grew by the kitchen door. "The old tree is good for nothing in the world but to help kittens grow. Is not that so, Sweetheart?"

Sweetheart, daughter of the house and queen of the farm, laughed a million or so of sunshine-twinkles up into Mother Delightful's dear face, and made a gentle dash after the last of six kittens that were clamoring in a wobbly procession of heads and tails up and down the trunk of the tree. Such a crooked tree! Just made for soft kitten paws to try themselves on. At first the quince had made an effort to reach the sky and had grown straight up for a few feet; then, as if that had been too hard work, it started due South; next, it made a funny letter S twist back to the North, and lastly made a bias attempt to get back to the skyward route. "Let's call it 'The Kitten Tree' then, Mother Delightful!"

"What's all this about a kitten tree?" asked Grandmother Dearest, peering with lovely wrinkly smiles over her gold-bowed glasses. She had just come from the pantry, where she had been stirring up some wonderful thing she called plum duff. No one knew exactly what it was, but it was good. No one could make such deliciousness as grandmother.

"You never knew, did you, Little One, that the old quince has been a kitten tree for years and years and years? Why, dear me, all the kittens, striped, spotted and mixed, have learned to climb and sharpen their claws on that old quince. We used to say that was what kept the tree young so long, having young things all about it. How many quarts of jam and jelly it has helped us to put down cellar! There now! Do look at those baby cats. They think the tree and the whole round earth was made for them."

Fluff and Duff and Rough, Stuff and 'Nough and Huff were turning sawed-off somersaults and doing double-and-twisted conniptions up and down the trunk, chewing one another's spike tails and acting as though they did not love one another a bit.

"Mother Dee! I am just jealous for The Kitten Tree," said the tender-hearted Sweetheart. "I want it to look young and quincy again. If it can't grow quinces, may I plant morning glories, bushels of them, down here at the foot? The tree will not care, will it? Maybe it will like to have flowers on it again. And it will be just a lovely up-stairs garden for my kittens to play on. May Abe help me make it, Mother Dee?"

Mother's love name was such a sweet one that when Sweetheart spoke it coaxingly, with a little mew in her voice such as the kittens have in their voices when Abe is coming up from the barn with the big pails of warm milk, she almost always gets what she wants. And that is because, between you and me and the Kitten Tree, she nearly always wants nice things.

So Mother Delightful said "Yes," and Sweetheart hurried away to the garden to find Abe.

"I want The Kitten Tree upstairs garden made just like you make my mother's," said the little child. "Will you please be very particular and dig it away down because we are going to have flowers on the tree this summer."

Abe had no manner of an idea what Sweetheart meant with her upstairs and her kitten tree; but he hurried away, as every one else did, to do what the child wanted him to. He dug deep all about the crazy trunk; he brought manure and mixed carefully with the earth that had not been stirred for years; he spaded and hoed and raked and piled the soil up about the old trunk. And Mother Earth, while she looked surprised, looked too as if she was really glad to get back close to the heart of her tree-child again, even if it did not bloom every spring as it used to do.

Grandfather became interested and gave the little gardener and friend of baby cats and flowerless quince tree a box of smooth, white shells he had picked up by the seaside. With these Sweetheart made a pretty border for the garden. Grandmother came and set out roots of parsley. Mother set out some tiny plants of nasturtium from her own garden, and inside of all they scattered the little brown seeds that would send